

REMARKS

Claims 35-52 remain pending in the application including independent claims 35 and 50.

The drawings stand objected to for not showing the rigid member attachment interfaces. The drawings have been revised to include revised Figures 1 and 2 to identify the seat belt material and to show the different attachment embodiments. Figure 3 has been revised to be Figure 3A and a new Figure 3B is added showing looped material installed on the belt force sensor. A replacement set of drawing sheets is being submitted with the present amendment. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully asserts that all drawing objections have now been fully addressed.

The specification is objected to because the examiner argues that it is unclear how the rigid member is attached to the male or female members of the seat belt. The seat belt includes belt material 43 that is attached to both the male and female members of the seat belt as known. The specification has been revised to identify the belt material shown in the Figures. Material from the seat belt associated with either the male or female member is looped through opening 86 of the plate 42 and the other end of the plate 42 is attached to a vehicle structure. The specification has been revised to reflect that Figure 3 has been changed to Figure 3A and that new Figure 3B has been added. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully asserts that all specification objections have now been fully addressed.

Claims 35-52 stand objected to because the examiner argues that it is unclear how the rigid member is attached to the male or female members of the seat belt 22. In response to the examiner's objections, claims 35 and 50 have been amended to eliminate reference to male and female members and now merely refer to the seat belt assembly itself. This should overcome the examiner's objection to the claim language. Applicant respectfully asserts that the amendment does not raise any new issues for searching and/or consideration, and

applicant requests that the amendment be entered as the amendment presents the claims in better form for consideration on appeal.

Claims 35-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki (US 6264236) in view of Steffens, Jr. Claims 37-49 and 51 do not stand rejected under any prior art.

Claim 35 recites that the rigid member is attached to the seat belt assembly and has a first end for supporting a seat belt portion and a second end integrally formed with the first end for attachment to a vehicle structure. Aoki discloses a buckle body 11, a latch 12, and a tongue plate 13. A strain gage 14 is mounted to the latch 12 and a circuit substrate 15 is separately mounted to the buckle body 11. The examiner argues plate (latch) 12 corresponds to applicant's claimed rigid member.

The latch 12 of Aoki does not include the features of the claimed rigid member. The latch 12 has a first end that is coupled to the tongue plate 13 and a second end that is slidably received within the buckle body. Thus, there is no first end that supports a seat belt portion with a second end for attachment to a vehicle structure. At best, the latch 12 has one end, i.e. the end with sensor 14, which is associated with both the seat belt portion and the vehicle structure. The buckle body is mounted to a seat belt portion, which is mounted to the vehicle body.

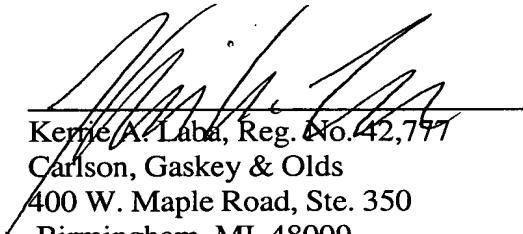
The opposite end of the latch, i.e. the end associated with the tongue plate 14 does not support a seat belt portion. Further, even if the tongue plate were considered to be part of the "rigid member," the looped portion in the tongue plate 14 does not support seat belt material. As such, Aoki does not disclose, suggest, or teach the claimed invention. Steffens, Jr. also does not disclose the claimed invention. Thus, claim 35 is allowable over Aoki and Steffens, Jr. For similar reasons, claim 50 is also allowable.

Claim 52 recites that the rigid member includes a neck portion positioned between the first and second ends having a width that is less than the width of the first and second ends *where the seat belt force sensor is mounted on the neck portion*. The examiner argues that

latch 12 corresponds to the claimed rigid member. It is clear that sensor 14 is not mounted at the neck portion of latch 12 (see Figure 2a). the sensor 14 is actually mounted on the widest portion of the latch 12. Thus, applicant respectfully asserts that the rejection of claim 52 is improper and requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Applicant asserts that all claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests an indication of such. Applicant believes that no additional fees are necessary, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

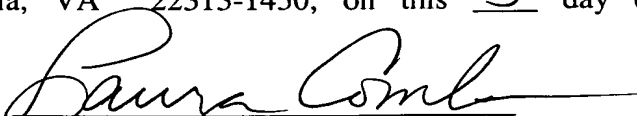


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Dated: December 5, 2005

CERTIFICATE OF MAIL

I hereby certify that the enclosed Response is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 5 day of Dec., 2005.



Laura Combs